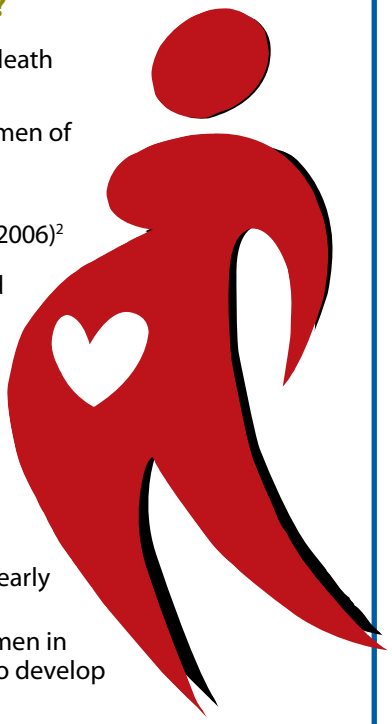
Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) and Risk Factors for CVD among Women of Reproductive Age (18-44 years)

Why should CDC focus CVD prevention efforts to women of reproductive age?



- High blood pressure and high cholesterol are major risk factors for CVD, the leading cause of death in women.
- These conditions often manifest during the adult reproductive years (ages 18-44). Among women of reproductive age:
  - 1 in 10 women ages 18-44 years have high blood pressure (2009)[1]
  - 3 in 20 women ages 20-45 years have high low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) (1999-2006)[2]
- Tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and unhealthy weight are CVD risk factors, and CDC's Million Hearts Initiative Campaign supports community activities to help Americans live tobacco free, improve nutrition, increase regular physical activity, and maintain a healthy weight.[3-4] Many women of reproductive age are in need of such efforts.
  - About half of women of reproductive age are physically inactive (2007)[5]
  - Nearly one third of women of reproductive age are obese (2003-2006)[5]
  - One-fifth of women of reproductive age smoke (2006-2008)[5]
- The pregnancy state and birth outcomes can unmask increased future risk of CVD.
  - History of preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, or pregnancy-induced hypertension may be early indicators of CVD risk factors in women.[6]
  - Women with high blood pressure during pregnancy (approximately 8% of all pregnant women in 2006)[7] are about 3 times as likely to develop hypertension later in life and 2 times as likely to develop heart disease.[8-10]
  - Women who deliver early (before 37 weeks) or have a growth restricted infant face approximately two times the risk of developing CVD later in life compared to women who have normal weight infants born at term.[11-12]
- Chronic hypertension contributes to serious illness or death for pregnant women, including:
  - acute renal failure,
  - pulmonary edema,
  - preeclampsia, and
  - stroke.[13]
- Approximately one in ten of all pregnancy-related deaths (within one year of delivery) are due to CVD (1998-2005).[14]
- Hypertensive disorders during pregnancy, especially preeclampsia, contributes to fetal growth restriction, preterm delivery and preterm-related deaths.[15]

What is CDC doing?

- Conducting surveillance
  - Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System
  - Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System
  - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
- Increasing epidemiologic capacity at the state, local, territorial, and tribal level to effectively use data for CVD prevention
  - Direct assistance through 12 field assignments of MCH Epidemiologists and fellows
  - Convening the Annual Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Conference
  - Promoting other peer exchange forums and continuing education trainings
- Evaluating interventions and identifying evidence-based prevention practices through $2.1 million investment in two special interest projects (2009-2013)
  - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  - University of Washington

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
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